

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Senators Joe Lieberman and Richard Blumenthal, Congressman Joe Courtney and Governor Dannel P. Malloy today applauded the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Disaster Declaration for the failure of commercial Northeast groundfish fisheries in the 2013 fishing season. Earlier this week, Lieberman, Blumenthal and Courtney [wrote](#)

to President Obama in support of the State’s request for a declaration, which makes it possible for Congress to appropriate funds toward alleviating the financial hardship to fishermen caused by the fishery disaster. If funds are appropriated, NOAA will work closely with Congress and the Governors representing the affected states to develop plans to assist coastal communities.

Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank is declaring the commercial fishery failure under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Section 308(b) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act. Under the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, fishermen will qualify for the Small Business Administration’s Economic Injury Disaster Loan program regardless of Congressional action.

“Connecticut has a strong maritime legacy that we must do all we can to support. Not only do these fisheries serve as a source of income for our fishermen, but they are an essential link to a way of life for many in our state,” **said Senator Lieberman**. “Unfortunately, in recent years, we have seen significant depletions of fish stocks, and with our oceans changing rapidly we can expect this will occur again. I applaud NOAA’s decision to declare a disaster in Northeast fisheries, and Governor Malloy’s proactive effort to seek the disaster declaration.”

“I applaud the Obama Administration for issuing this declaration, which paves the way for the provision of critical assistance to hardworking fishermen in Connecticut whose ability to earn a living is inhibited by new groundfish catch limits,” **said Senator Blumenthal**. “These fishermen

– many of whom are small business owners – contribute a great deal to local economies on Connecticut’s coastline and throughout the state, and they deserve our strongest support. I will continue to fight on their behalf with my colleagues in the Connecticut delegation.”

“Through no fault of their own – and despite adhering to catch limits – Connecticut fishermen are facing serious financial hardship as groundfish populations rebuild slowly,” **said Congressman Courtney.**

“This Disaster Declaration will mitigate some of those challenges, and allow Congress to bolster our fishermen and their small businesses, as we look to long-term solutions that will protect a New England tradition of fishing.”

On August 23, 2012, Governor Malloy drafted a [letter](#) to NOAA requesting the disaster declaration and action and assistance for Connecticut’s fishermen.

“Connecticut is appreciative of the work that our Congressional delegation is doing to help protect our economy,” **said Governor Malloy.** “We have a long and rich maritime tradition in our state, one that contributes more than \$5 billion to our economy. NOAA’s action today is an important first step in supporting and preserving our history, and ensuring the men and women who work in our coastal industries can continue to support their families despite these difficult times.”

For the past several months, NOAA and the New England Fishery Management Council have

engaged the fishing industry and others in discussions to develop actions that can be taken given the anticipated low quotas for some key stocks in the groundfish fishery.

###